

# NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program

## Removal Case Study: *Samala*



Contributing Agency: Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands – Coastal Resources Management

### OVERVIEW

#### **VESSEL**

*Dimensions:* 16' x 110'      *Hull:* Wood  
*Type:* Cabin Cruiser      *Tonnage:* 50-100

#### **SITE**

*Name:* Outer Cove Marina  
*Location:* Saipan, CNMI  
*Coordinates:* 15.22188'N 145.72720'E  
*Land:* CNMI Public Land

#### **INCIDENT & REMOVAL**

*Situation:* Broke free & grounded during typhoon  
*Incident Date:* December 1990  
*Total Duration:* 1.5 years from ID as removal priority through removal. Phase II forthcoming  
*Actual Operations:* One month  
*Cost:* \$56,450  
*Funding:* NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program / US Coral Reef Initiative – \$50,000  
CNMI Government - \$6450  
*Agencies Involved:* USGC, CNMI Department of Lands & Natural Resources, CNMI Coastal Resources Management Office, NOAA  
*Primary Threats:* Public Safety, Environment, Aesthetic



### DETAILS

#### **VESSEL, HISTORY & INCIDENT**

NOAA AVP #: 1251

The *Samala* was purchased in Florida by a CNMI corporation in June 1990. The owner of the company, Henry Sablan, planned to use the vessel as a luxury cruise boat for diving and other tourism activities. The boat was brought to the CNMI via the Federated States of Micronesia in December 1990. The owner was in the process of soliciting for a captain and crew in the Philippines when a typhoon hit (March 1991). The vessel grounded in a low energy lagoon next to Saipan's Outer Cove Marina at which time the owner abandoned the vessel. It rested in approximately three feet of water, leaving almost the entire vessel exposed, six feet above line at maximum. The grounded vessel was struck by several other storms over the course of several years, leaving a twenty foot scour around the hull. The site is also adjacent to American Memorial Park, a site leased to the Federal National Park Service.

The Samala was surveyed by the NOAA Abandoned Vessel Program team in June 2003. Fuel and compressed fuel tanks were found on board. Because of the vessel's proximity to coral habitat and sea grass beds, it was ranked "high priority" for removal.

In 2004 the CNMI Department of Lands and Natural Resources (DLNR) was provided with Coral Reef Initiative funding via the Coastal Resources Management Office (CRMO) to contract a salvage company to remove the vessel. A company was selected in August of that year. However, a series of typhoons and a tropical storm hit before the salvage could begin in November 2004; breaking the hull into multiple sections and creating an even larger field of smaller debris. This further threatened the surrounding coral reef and sea grass habitat.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE & SALVAGE OPERATIONS**

*Contractor:* CNMI Marine Salvage & Maintenance  
*Authority:* The vessel was deemed "abandoned" by the Attorney General's Office under the Admiralty Law.  
*Permits:* A US Army Corps Nation Wide Permit 22 authorization, a waiver for a Division of Environmental Quality 401 Water Quality Certification, and a CRM Permit were obtained prior to commencing the salvage.

CMS & M began work in November 2004, after a series of two major typhoons and a tropical storm further battered the vessel and delayed operations. By the start of work, the hull and engine room had collapsed, creating a larger field of scattered debris. The seasonal tides had increased and the visibility had diminished substantially due to rougher seas. These factors resulted in additional man-hours for the removal, beyond those originally planned.

A make-shift catamaran derrick barge was used in the water to lift heavy equipment, machinery, and metal pieces from the vessel. Fuel tanks and other diving apparatus were also removed without incident. At least 35 metric tons of heavy equipment and machinery and another 10 metric tons of smaller debris were salvaged. A small boat was used to transport the salvaged material to shore. Once near shore a boom truck off-loaded the material onto a flatbed that transported the salvaged material to an off-site staging area, owned by the contractor, for separation. Metal was taken to a scrap yard for eventual recycling off island, while the remaining debris is being processed for further recycling before final disposal in the Saipan Marpi Landfill.

There still are some remains of the Samala at the grounded site, including a large engine block and some smaller debris which will require removal in a second phase. Phase II is estimated to cost an additional \$15,000 to \$20,000. CRMO and DLNR have already begun to set aside funds for the final operation.

## **DISPOSAL OPERATIONS**

*Contractor:* CNMI Marine Salvage & Maintenance  
*Authority:*  
*Permits:*

All metal was separated and sent off island for recycling. The remaining material is still being processed by the salvage company before final disposal at Saipan's Marpi Landfill.

## LESSONS LEARNED

*Improved local legislation and emergency contingency plans would help significantly.*

The lack of local legislation to deal with abandoned or derelict vessels made the legal taking of the Samala less clear cut and, therefore, more time consuming to implement.

The CNMI could also improve their enforcement of the emergency contingency plan requirement by vessel owners. This would allow agencies to more quickly prepare vessels for incoming storms and respond to emergency events.

Finally, there is a lack of local funds available to address derelict vessels. Beginning operations soon after an incident, or removing a vessel that is at risk of grounding or sinking, is usually the most cost effective option. Long delays that result from cobbling funding together lead to more expense as these boats continue to deteriorate to the point where the wrecks can no longer be floated out for removal, but must be cut into pieces and hauled away at much greater expense.

**REPORT DATE:**            *SEPTEMBER 2, 2005*

# Removal Case Study: Samala



*Vessel debris on coral head*



*Salvage crew on site*



*Debris retrieval*



*Loading truck for off site transport*

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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